

Results of BACBR Ringing Recovery Survey

The Bellringing Survival and Recovery Survey was completed in March 2021. A questionnaire was sent to all tower correspondents in the **80** Bedfordshire churches with 3 or more bells, as listed in the BACBR report/website. Responses were submitted via GoogleForms or by email, with paper copies available on request. In some cases results were inputted following a telephone conversation.

A very big **thank you** to all who responded, and to Angela Blackburn, Bob Jones and Sue Silver who followed up those who had not responded by the deadline date.

Questionnaires were completed by 63 towers, ie a 79% response rate.

The purpose of the document attached is to present the data, which we will then analyse and use to put in place a **recovery strategy**, not just for the immediate post-Covid period but also looking longer term at training needs, recruitment and retention. The aim of this is that **as many Bedfordshire towers as possible are able to ring bells for Sunday services into the future.**

We want to ensure that we involve as many ringers as possible in further discussions and planning. To facilitate this, **we would like to invite you, or a representative from your tower (or group of towers) to two workshops on 17 April and 8 May.** Details of these and other events being organised as a follow up to the survey are already on the website, including how to sign up.

The work which we are doing, and will be doing over the coming months, gives us a major opportunity to ensure a positive future for ringing in Bedfordshire and we hope that you will be involved.

Please do circulate this document to members of your band. There will be opportunities to give feedback and ask questions at the first workshop, but comments by email are also welcome.

Thank you again for your input so far.

With best wishes

Linda Garton Ringing Recovery Co-ordinator, BACBR backtoringing@bacbr.org.uk

Question 1:

How many regular* Sunday Service ringers did your local band have pre-Covid?

Notes: * at least once a month, not including regular visitors who may come to help.

Includes ringers who may not be members of the BACBR.

The data in Fig 1, below, is for all 80 towers with 3 or more bells, as listed in the BACBR report/website, based on:

- Responses from 63 towers.
- For the 17 towers from whom no questionnaire response was received, data from the 2019 BACBR report, plus knowledge of District Officers/ringers from nearby towers, has been used.

From the 63 towers who responded, the **total no of regular Sunday Service ringers at Bedfordshire towers pre-Covid was 350**. The estimated no of additional regular Sunday Service ringers at towers who did not respond was 16.

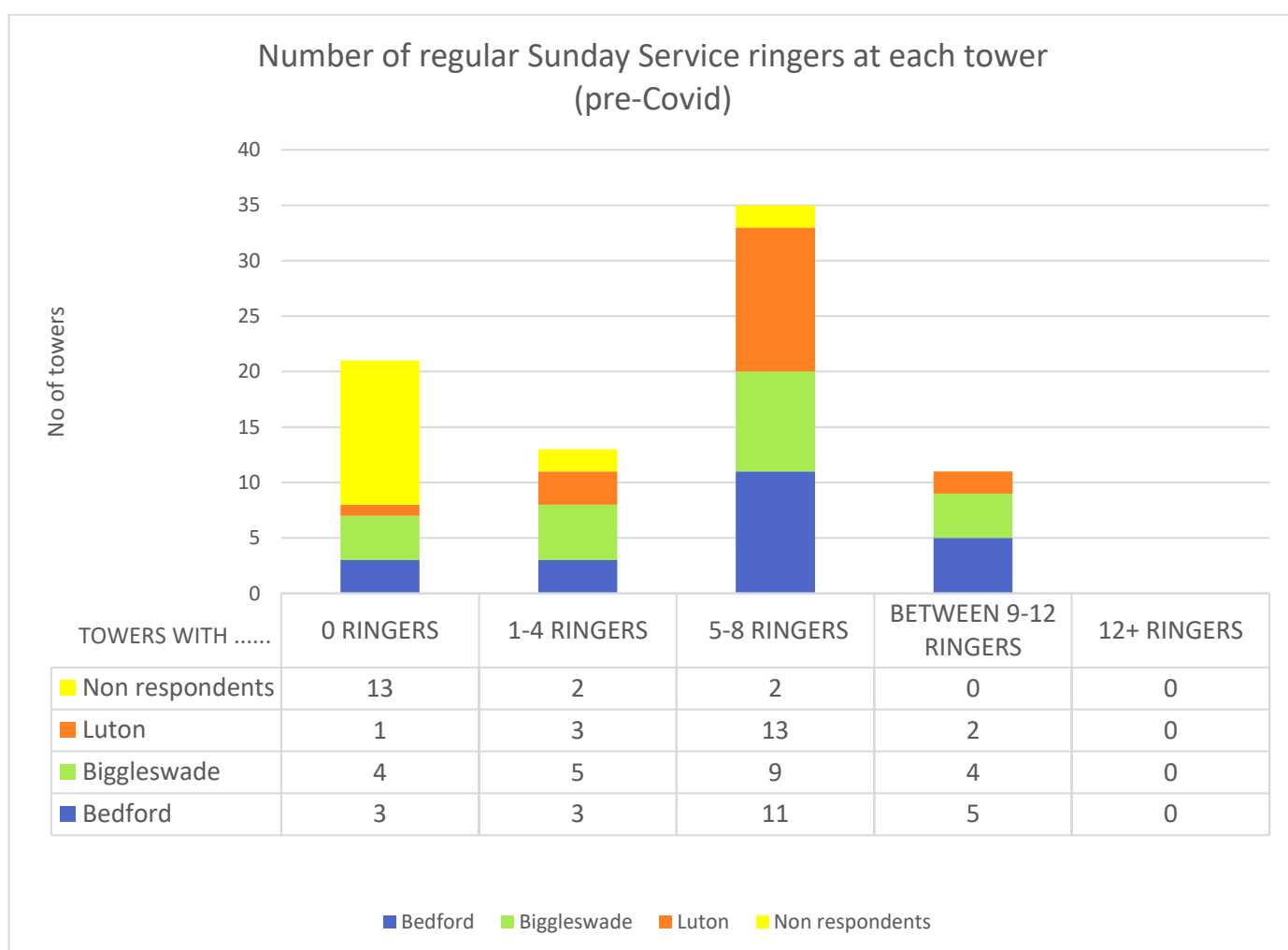


Figure 1

SUMMARY: (Including estimates for those towers who did not respond)

Of the 80 Bedfordshire towers with 3 or more bells:

21 have no ringers

13 have between 1-4 ringers

35 have between 5-8 ringers

11 have between 9-12 ringers

0 have 12+ ringers

Question 2:

How many of your ringers also assist at other towers on a Sunday?

The data in Figs 2-3 below is based on the 350 Sunday Service ringers identified by the 63 towers who responded to the questionnaire.

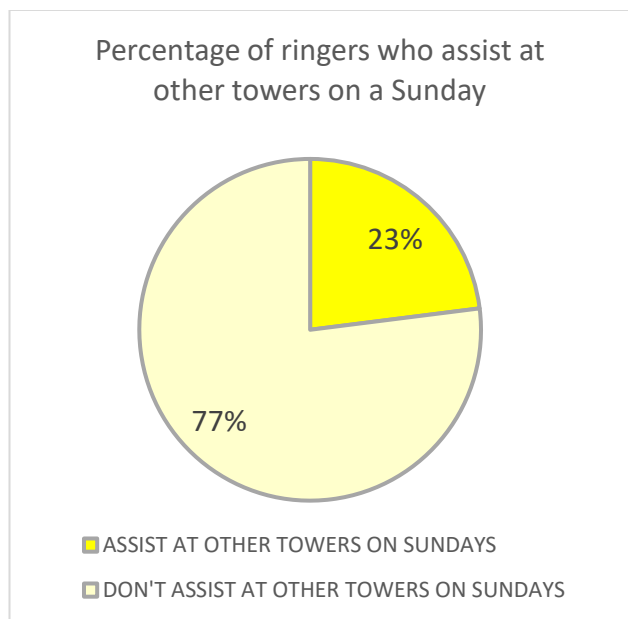


Figure 2

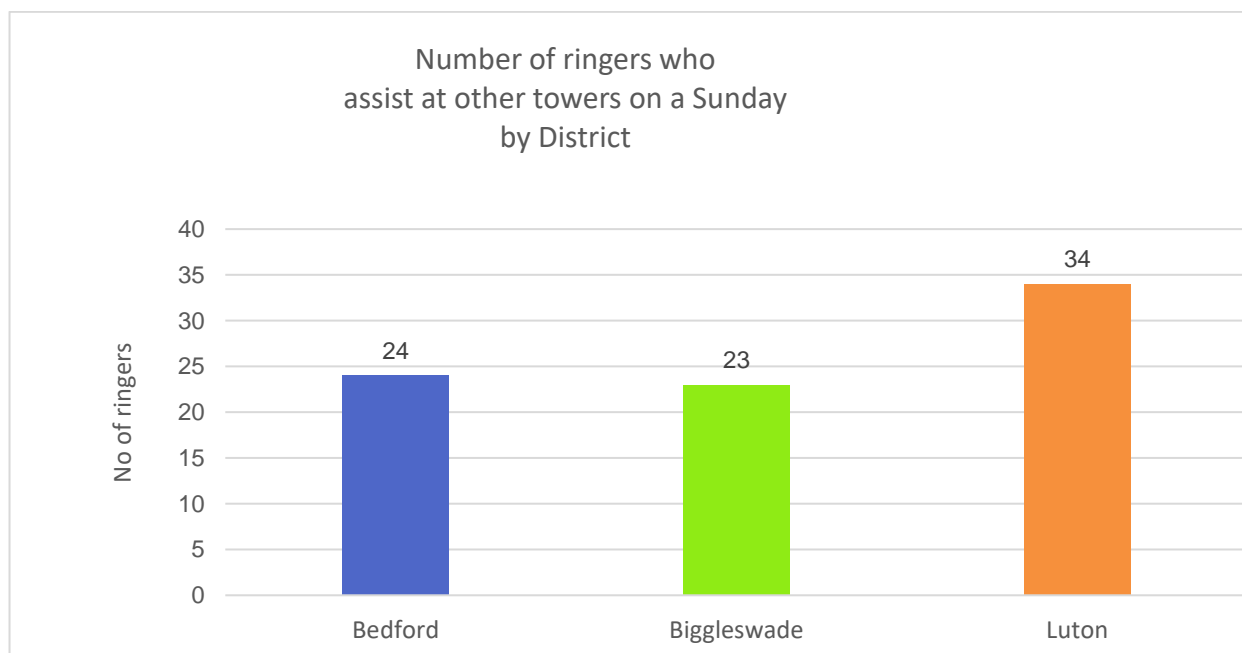


Figure 3

NOTE: The ringers who regularly assist with Sunday Service ringing at other towers come from:

- 10 Bedford District Towers
- 8 Biggleswade District Towers
- 9 Luton District Towers

Questions 3 and 4

How many of your regular Sunday Service ringers WILL/will NOT return post-Covid?

The data in Figs 4-6 below is based on the 63 towers who responded to the questionnaire. We know that these figures can only be a guess at this stage!

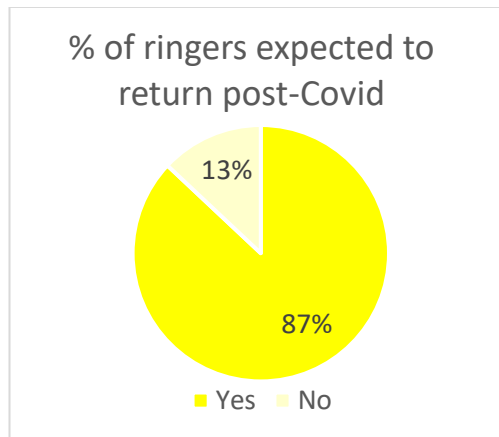


Figure 4

Losses of ringers by District	% of ringers expected to return	% of ringers expected NOT to return	Number of towers expecting a loss of ringers
Bedford	87	13	11
Biggleswade	85	15	11
Luton	91	9	4

Figure 5

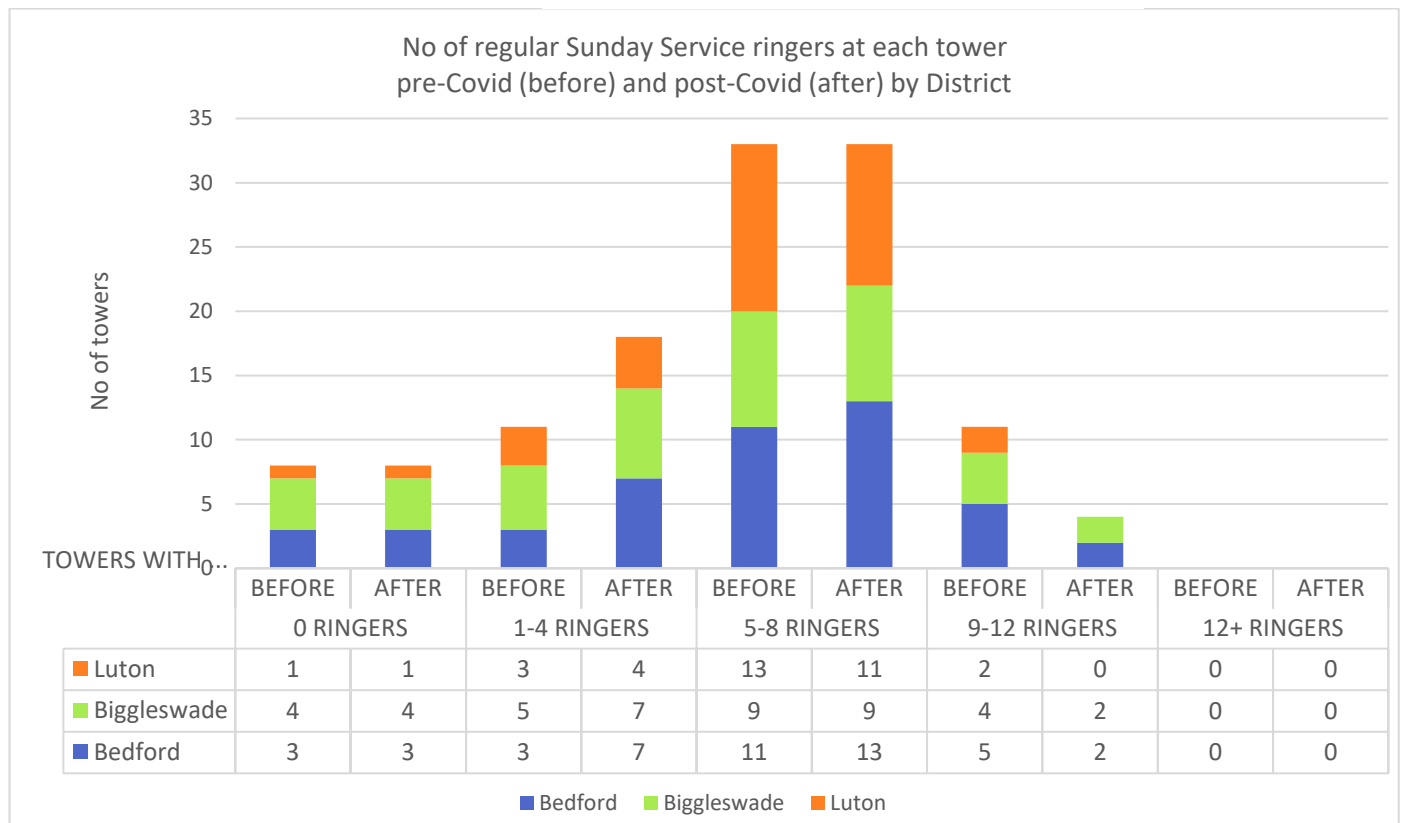


Figure 6

Summary:

Towers with	Before	After	Difference	Note
0 ringers	8	8	Same	Plus 13 towers who had no ringers prior to Covid, who did not respond to the survey.
Between 1-4 ringers	11	18	+7	
Between 5-8 ringers	33	33	Same	
Between 9-12 ringers	11	4	-7	
12+ ringers	0	0	Same	

Question 5:

Which of the following might be helpful to ringers at your tower who want to return post-Covid?

53 towers responded to this question, ticking all categories that were applicable.

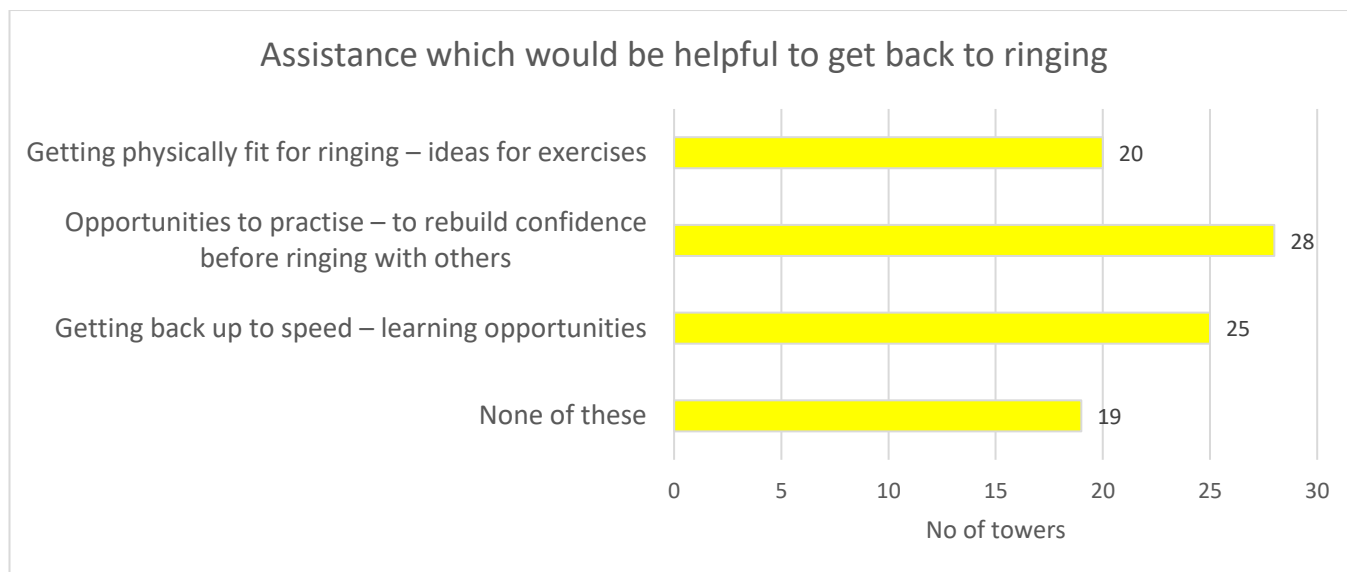


Figure 7

Question 6:

How frequently did your tower ring for Sunday Services in the 12 months prior to Covid?

Based on the 63 towers who responded to the questionnaire

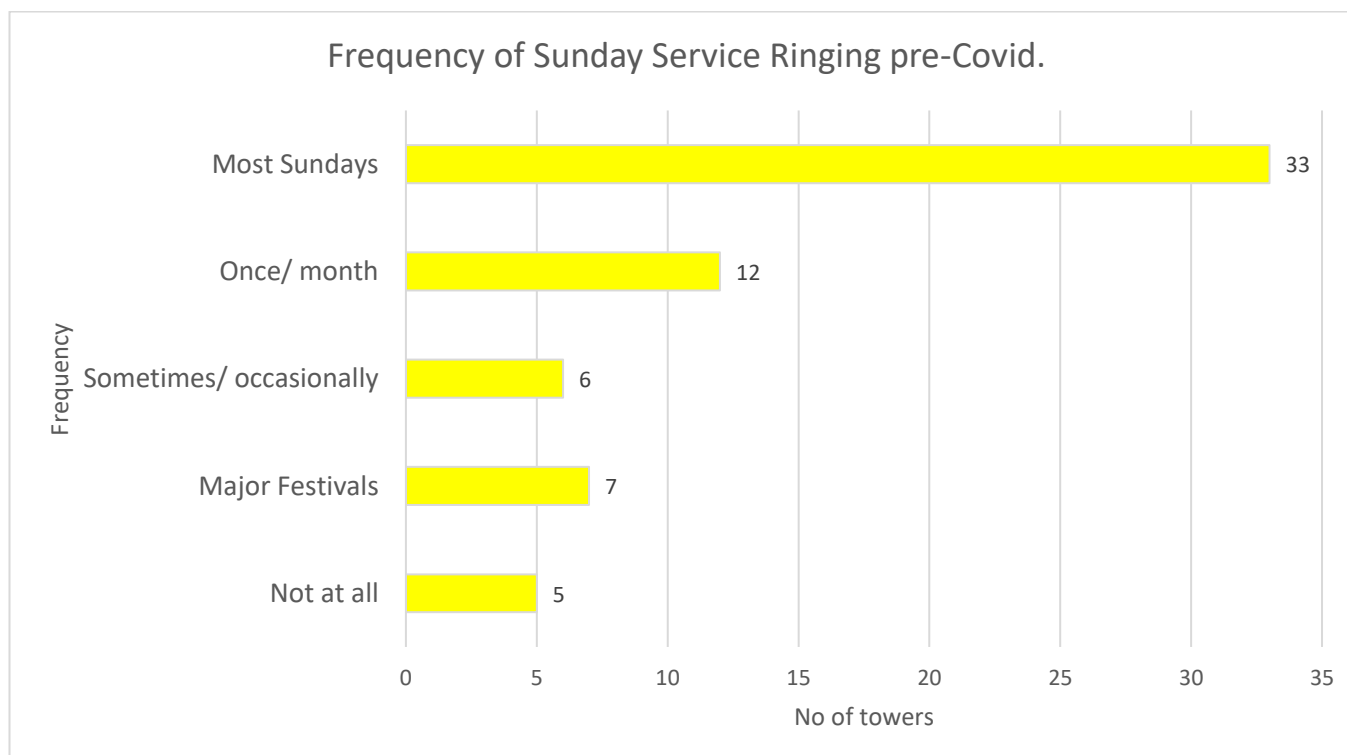


Figure 8

Question 7:

Has your tower rung one or more bells for Sunday Services during Covid, when regulations have permitted?

57 towers responded to this question.

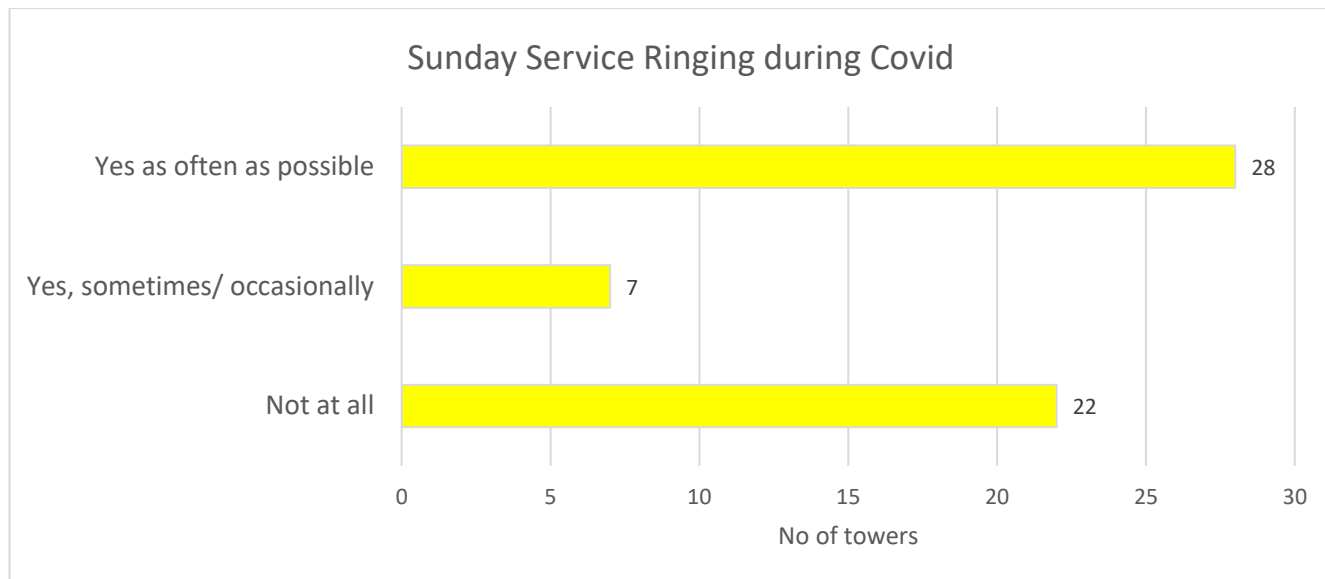


Figure 9

Question 8:

How frequently did your tower have a Practice Night in the 12 months prior to Covid?

Based on the 63 towers who responded to the questionnaire

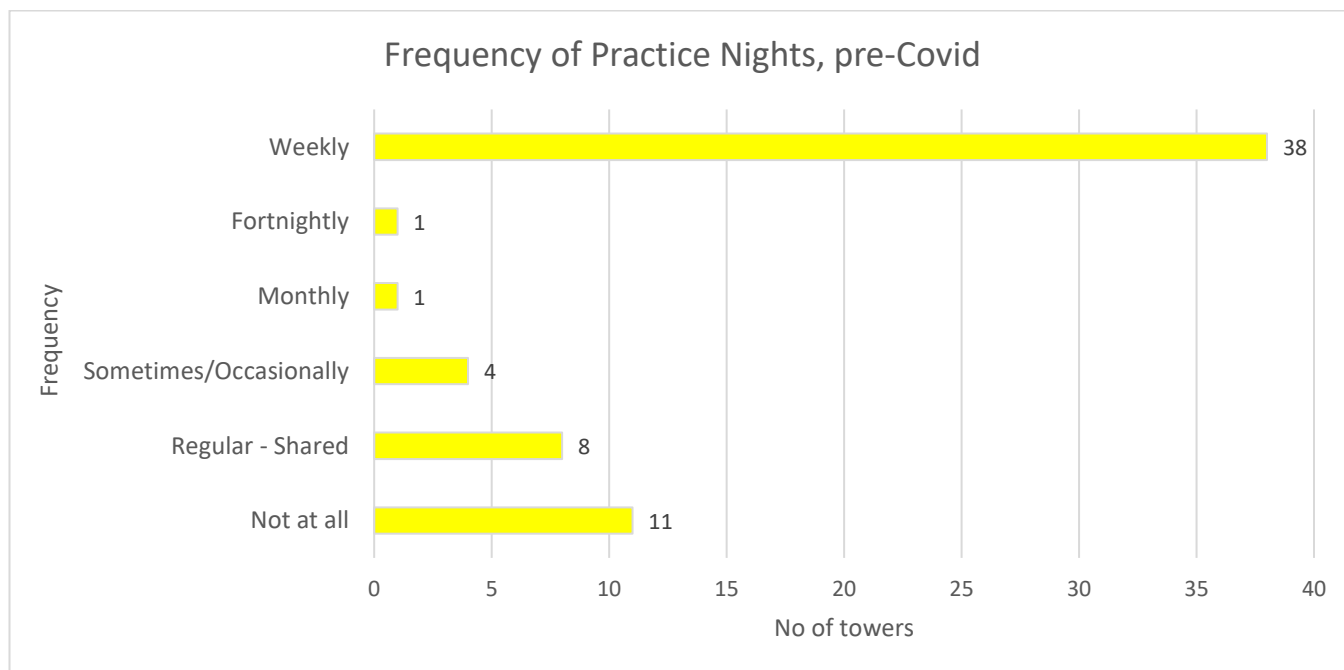


Figure 10

Question 9:

Do you have close links with other towers?

(eg shared Practice Night, regularly visit each other's practices, help each other with Sunday Service ringing.)

Fig 11 is based on the 63 towers who responded to the questionnaire.

Fig 12 shows the types of links with other towers (Towers may fall into more than one category)

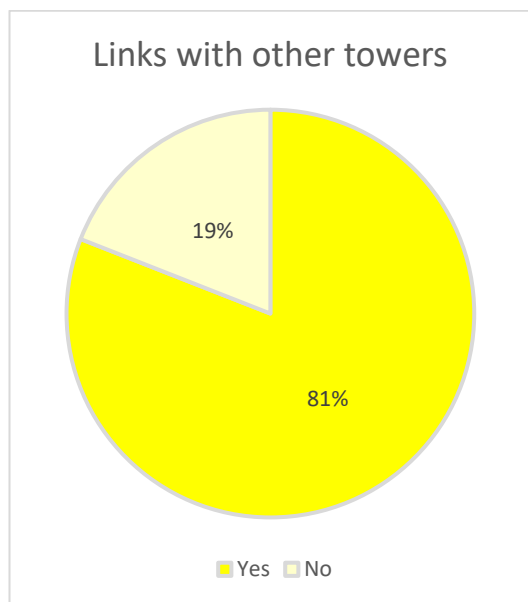


Figure 11

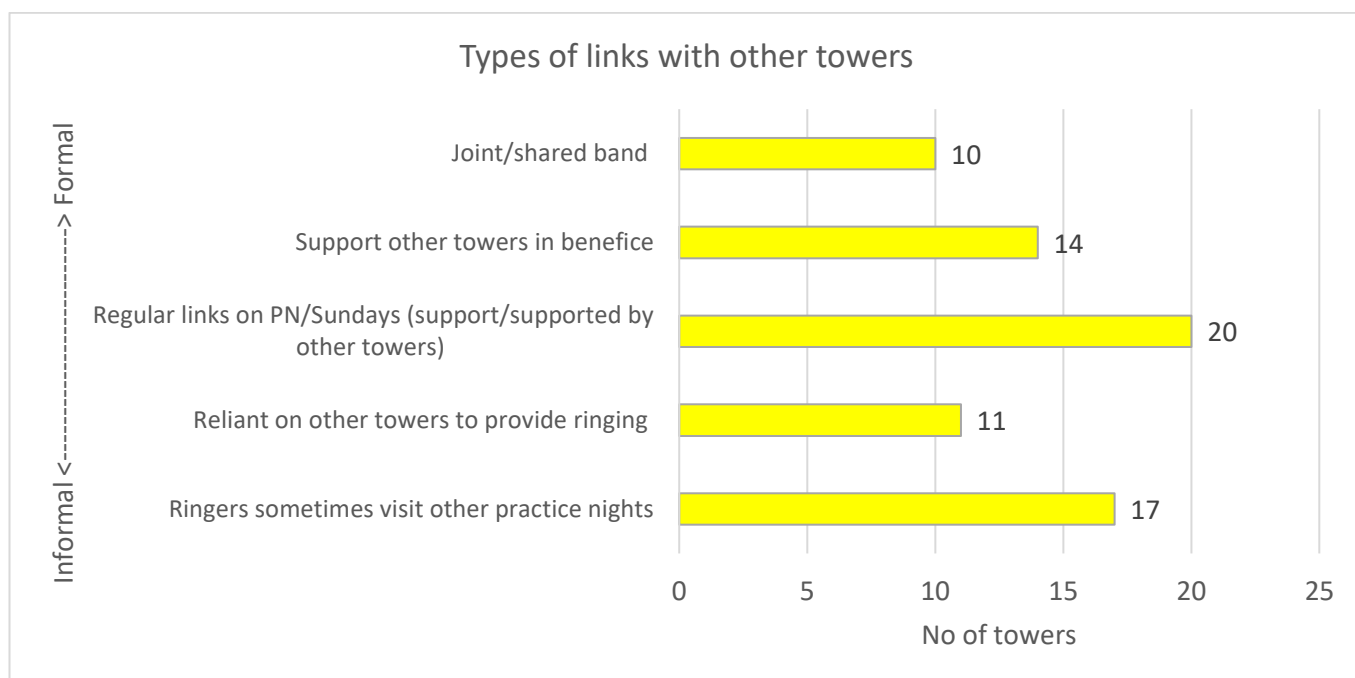


Figure 12

Question 10:

During Covid, have any of the following activities been organised by your tower?

51 towers responded to this question, ticking all categories that were applicable.

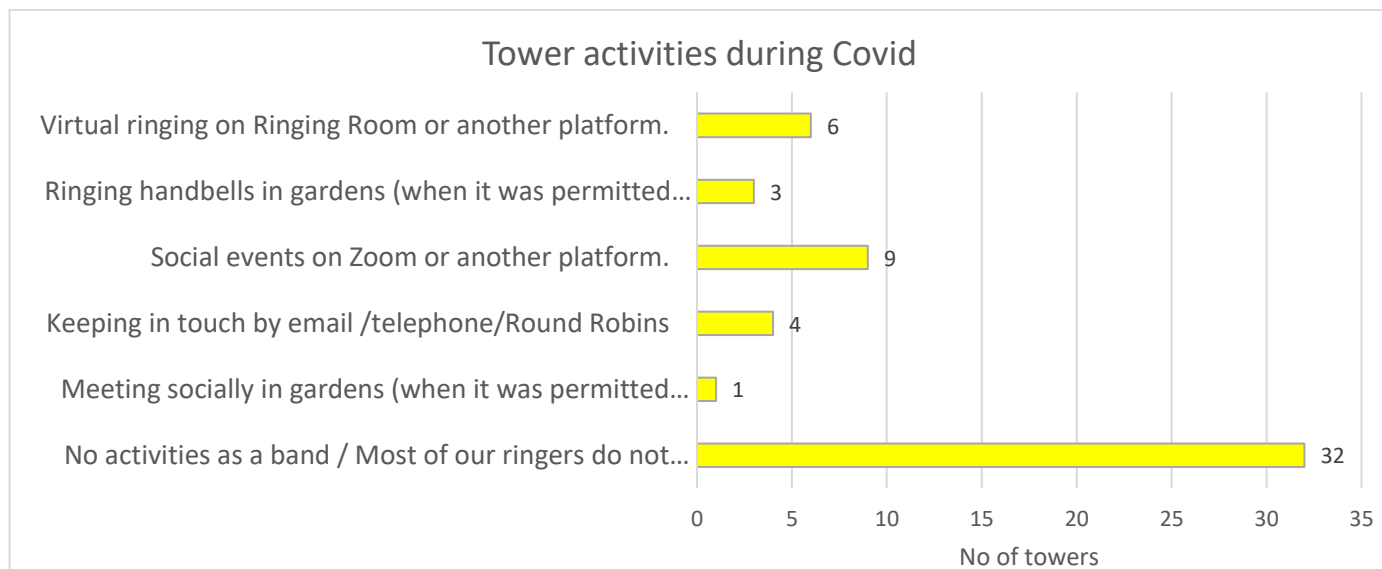


Figure 13

Question 11:

Which of the following online activities might ringers at your tower be interested in attending whilst Covid restrictions are still in place?

50 towers responded to this question, ticking all categories that were applicable.

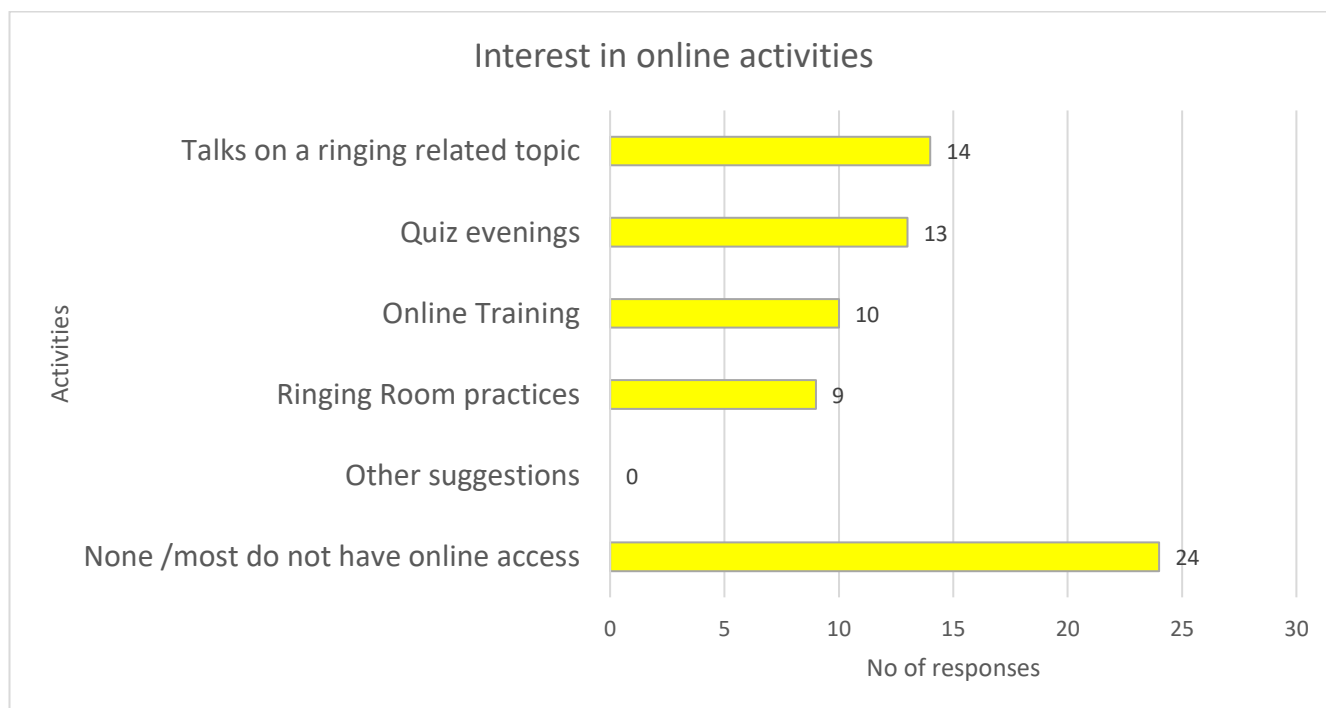


Figure 14

Question 12:

How many ringers at your tower have taught bell handling in the past and will still be able to do so post-Covid?

Figs 15 and 16 are based on the 63 towers who responded to the questionnaire.

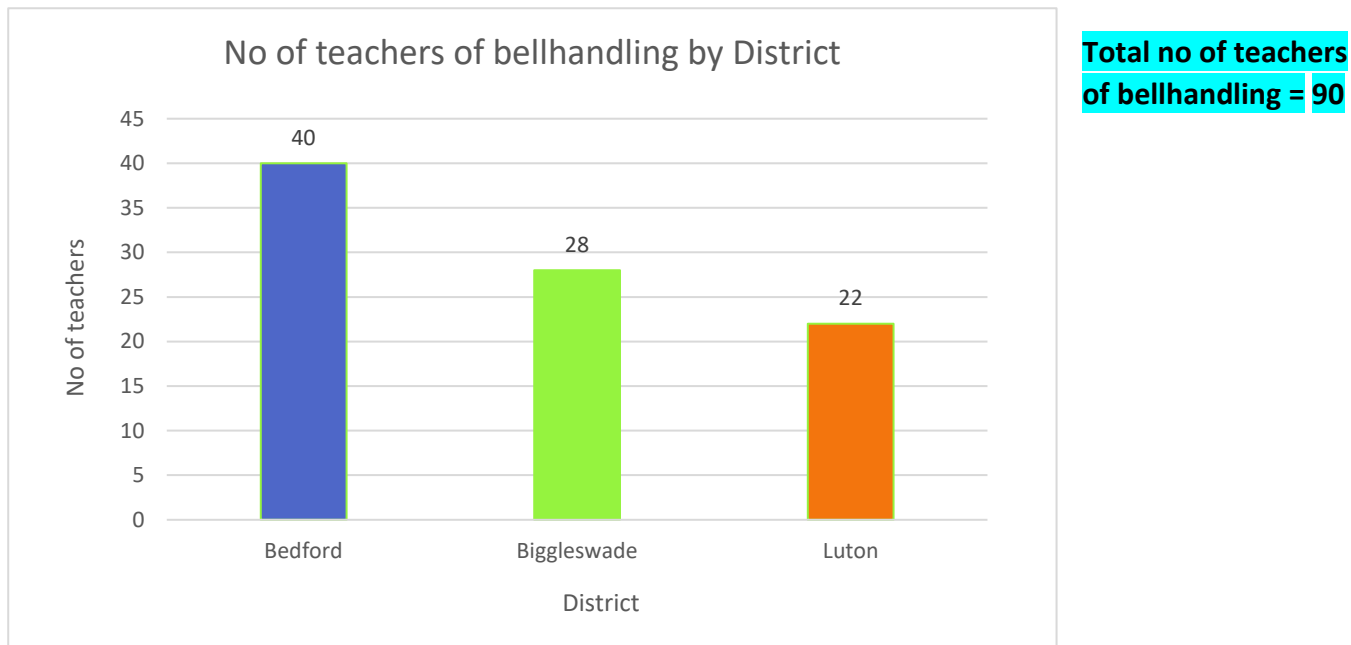


Figure 15

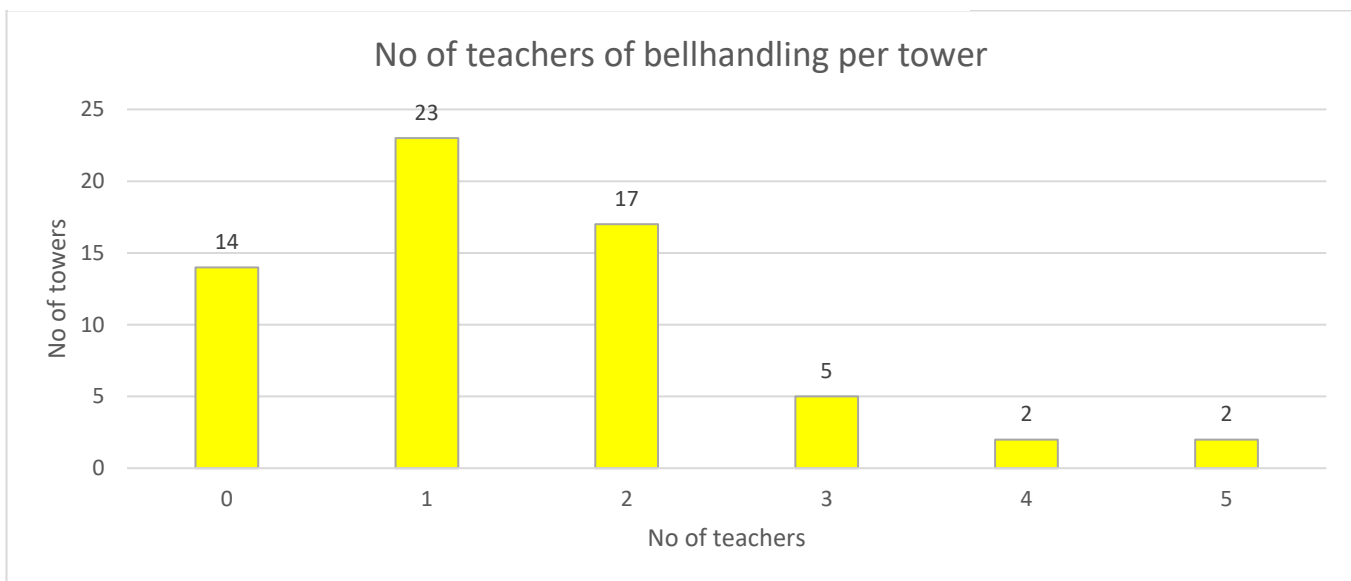


Figure 16

SUMMARY:

- 14 towers have no teachers of bellhandling
(Includes the 8 towers who responded to the survey who have no ringers)
- 23 towers have only one teacher of bellhandling.
(What happens if this person is no longer able to teach?)
- 17 towers have 2 teachers of bellhandling
- 9 towers have 3 or more teachers of bellhandling.

Question 13:

How many lapsed ringers are there in your community that you know of?

52 towers responded to this question.

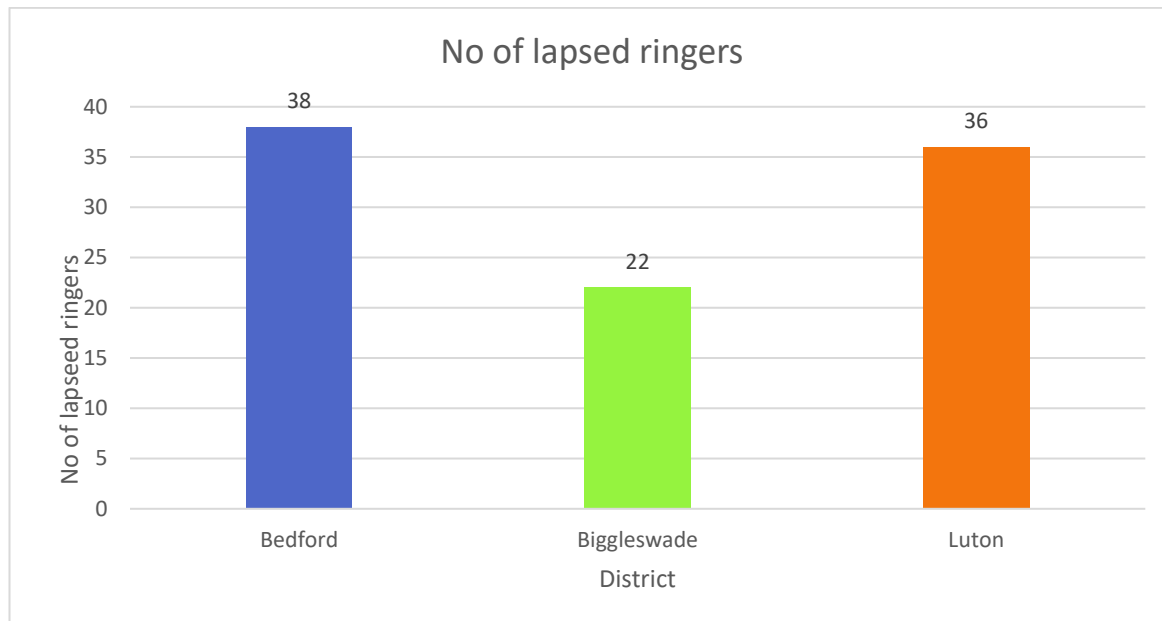


Figure 17

NOTE: The chart above indicates a total of **96 known lapsed ringers** in our communities. However, in addition 6 towers reported that there were lapsed ringers in their community no longer able to ring due to age/infirmity etc. These are not included above, but there may well be others unable to come back to ringing even if they wanted to included in the statistics above. In retrospect, this question should have asked how many lapsed ringers are known who would still be physically able to ring if they so wished... or a similar wording!

Question 14:

Have you had any thoughts about how your tower might recruit new ringers post-Covid? If yes, please share any ideas.

(Responses in black are ideas/opportunities; Responses in blue are issues/barriers)

Open Days:

- Tower open day (x4); We have had church open days in the past which included ringing display; open the tower during town and church festival days; We were wanting to hold an "open tower", preferably coinciding with some other suitable event that brings people to the church.
- ... there's been a lot of interest in the town when we have been able to ring last year.
- The main focus will have to be recruitment. We have been trying to attract people for some years without success - we always have the tower open on fete days which is usually popular but no-one comes back! We have to find ways of making contact with new people and making it more interesting.

Parish/Village magazines:

- Notice, advertisement, article in Parish/Village Magazine (x9);
- ...and follow up contacts made.
- Advertising in local community magazine delivered to all households in *** worked well for us previously.
- Have already put a piece in the village newsletter (x3); We have put some words in the Parish magazine on the back of the Captain Tom ringing. Before Covid we were going to try to recruit for a benefice band which mean we could try to recruit from *** as well which is a bigger village with more activities.
- Appeal for lapsed ringers to return in local paper and publications.
- We regularly put short notices in the village magazine to raise awareness.
- Prior to covid articles in local village newsletter etc. failed to get any learners. The Rectors feels *** is a village with mainly elderly people and comments this is evidenced that at most perhaps 4 children catch a School bus. Post Covid probably no different.
- We have always struggled to recruit- we do advertise but get no response.
- We have tried so many times without success, advertising in the local newsletters etc. When we have had some interest people have nearly always given up after a few months.

Social media:

- Facebook (x2); local Facebook Group Page invite to open evenings.

Schools/youth groups

- Planned visit to tower by youth group (cancelled because of Covid.)
- Contacting schools and University
- Liaison with local school, children of an existing ringer.
- Get permission to take a group of ringers into (local church academy) to give a talk and a possible visit to the belfry; We hope to get back to inviting (local church school) pupils to visit the tower and have a go.

- Could possibly contact Duke of Edinburgh department at (local) school as we sometimes get ringers from them, generally they don't stay but the hope is we interest a parent!
- I was teaching one 11 year old prior to lockdown and hopefully she will return but most of the teaching was done at *** due to the extreme difficulty in handling *** bells. All lessons had to be fitted round school work. Just getting to working out how to get her involved in rounds etc. when we had to stop. Parents are very supportive but will not allow any interference with school/homework etc. Chance of getting others involved unlikely.

Personal contact

- Personal contact and the offer beer after ringing;
- Always thinking about it and whenever possible I go out recruiting around the local area.
- I intend attending some of the 'Teas in Church' each Sunday afternoon to see if I can interest anyone in having a go.
- I might have to start accosting fellow dog walkers to ask them!

Church community

- Recruiting from the Church community with the help of the Rector; We hope to have an open time as part of a weekend along with other groups in the church.

Other comments:

- Need to be aware of safeguarding guidelines.
- We have some new learners lined up to start as soon as possible.

Additional comments:

Age:

As we have an average age of 65, IT is not our favourite pastime.

Age profiles of ringers in Tower, one aged 40+ , three 60+ three 70+ one 80+.

In addition the health of some of our elderly ringers has deteriorated and they have weaker muscles than they had a year ago when they last rang.

We are all of an age now, so difficult to maintain fitness and enthusiasm.

Needing to build confidence/be assured of safety

When we are finally allowed to ring we need to start slowly e.g. half hour practices to start with building up to longer practices over a few months.

We hope to be able to run sessions at *** to help those who have lost confidence during the pandemic.

I think that the husband and wife who have dropped out will come back once they are satisfied that covid threat is over.

Some of our ringers are reluctant to return until there are no social distancing rules and face coverings do not have to be worn.

Some of our newer ringers were less confident about ringing (*during covid, when permitted*) when established ringers were not around.

We need opportunities to practice and get up to speed. Two ringers have said they won't ring on a Sunday until they have had plenty of practice on practice nights.

Support/lack of support

We have six lovely bells and it is such a shame that we cannot even get enough support to practice occasionally, although we used to sometimes get visitors from other towers. The regular ringers are not always available on a Sunday so we often struggled to get a decent band

It would be helpful if other experienced ringers would be willing to visit other practices in the future as some do at present.

Teaching bellhandling

***used to teach but is no longer able to ring. Two or three of us used to help but not from scratch.

The Ringing Masters at (4 local towers) do give a lot of support for which I'm most grateful.

We may need help with tuition if we are to bring on new ringers.

Levels of interest / willingness to engage

Our ringers are unlikely to want to join in wider events.

Tower members have very different levels of interest and engagement. Mostly they are Sunday service ringers with little interest in much beyond that and for who ringing is not a high priority vs family and other activities.

We tried to organise some online training early on in covid, but there was not enough interest to make it worthwhile. We had one person who was interested in learning to ring before covid, but due to lack of interest/engagement with online activities by the band it's not clear if they are likely to return.

Tried virtual ringing once but my brain couldn't cope

Keeping in touch

Most of the band were not interested in online events on Zoom or virtual ringing, mainly because 2 do not have online access. In the light of this I have kept in contact with the band by a text message to the whole band on Sunday mornings when we would normally meet to ring for service. I have also forwarded the Central Council & Association updates by email (with copies to *** who has no email). We have also circulated the Ringing World round the band as this would normally be read in the tower.

All of our adult ringers have rung on at least one occasion since July 2020.

We did try a Zoom social event in the early part of the first lockdown.

Looking forward to post-Covid

We do not currently have an active bell ringing team but this is being explored.

Most of my ringers are very keen to get back to ringing. When we started back last year they were all keen to ring again.

At present we do not have our own dedicated regular bell ringers but we are exploring this as planned before Covid. As churchwarden I swing chime a bell having been shown 'shown the ropes' by engineers from Taylor Bells.